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300843Z Nov 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 003928

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FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

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TAGS: [AORC](#) [AFIN](#) [KUNR](#) [ICCRM](#)

SUBJECT: 24TH ICCROM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. Summary: the 24th session of the General Assembly of the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCRM) met November 9 - 11. The ICCROM Council recommended and the General Assembly approved the hiring of a new Director General. A real growth budget of 7.7 million euros was approved for the 2005-2007 biennium (in keeping with the long-term financial strategy approved in 2003), but a zero nominal growth scenario will be a prominent part of the next General Assembly meeting in 2007. A proposal to shift to a triennial General Assembly and budget cycle (vice biennial) was deferred at least until 2007. AmCit Blaine Cliver was reelected to the ICCROM Council during the GA and was then elected Chair of the Council at the follow-on Council meeting on November 12. End Summary.

Before We Begin

2. Prior to the GA, USDEL had been in touch with both the Japanese and Germans (both ZNG advocates) and on the eve of the session, a formal meeting was held with reps from China, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, and Spain to discuss the budget. By the time the meeting was held, the Council had already voted to recommend the hiring of a new DG. Thus there was some sympathy for giving a new leader the chance to make his own mark on the organization before imposing any "draconian" measures such as ZNG. USDEL, supported by the Japanese and Germans, clearly advocated ZNG. The Japanese went so far as to say they were prepared to withdraw their membership in ICCROM after 2007 if ZNG was not approved or if somehow their contribution continued to rise. After the meeting, they also asked USDEL if the U.S. would continue to remain a member of ICCROM after 2007 if consensus was reached on a budget level higher than ZNG. USDEL replied that the subject of withdrawal from the organization had never been broached and was unlikely, though nothing could be completely ruled out.

3. In terms of what could and could not be accomplished during this GA, there was concern on the part of some that since the GA had approved zero real growth as a long term financial strategy in 2003 and the budget had been prepared on that basis, no substantive changes could really be made until the next GA in 2007 (see further explanation below). USDEL argued that the GA could do as it chose as the governing body, including disapproval of the budget for the 2005-2007 biennium. Unfortunately USDEL was clearly in the minority among those present. Even the Japanese admitted that their "line in the sand" referred to the level of their contributions after 2007. In the end, USDEL and the Japanese agreed that interventions would be made both under the agenda item dealing with the report of the Council as well as the budget agenda item.

4. Director General: one duty of the Council is to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the hiring of the Director General. Dr. Stanley-Price had already served one term and wanted to be reappointed. Lacking a clear definition of how the reappointment process should work, ICCROM's legal advisor determined that the organization should go through the entire solicitation and interview process, with Dr. Stanley-Price as one of the candidates. A search committee of Council members was formed months ago and the committee came up with a short list of applicants (including Stanley-Price), each of whom made presentations to the entire Council immediately prior to the start of the General Assembly.

5. In the end, the Council decided to recommend the hiring of a new DG, Mounir Bouchenaki, currently Assistant Director General for Culture at UNESCO. The vote in Council was very close -- 12 supported Bouchenaki and 10 supported Stanley-Price (this fact was not revealed to the General Assembly). The Italians led the effort to replace Stanley-Price because of what they see as the "drift" of

the organization over the past several years away from what they believe is ICCROM's core mandate. In addition, Stanley-Price has regularly complained to the GOI (rightly, in our minds) about the state of the ICCROM facilities, which are supposed to be maintained by the Italian government but which have not received much of anything in the last twenty years. Finally, in the opinion of U.S. Council member Blaine Cliver, Stanley-Price's presentation to the Council was relatively weak, focusing on what he has accomplished rather than on what he hoped to accomplish in a second term.

And On To The General Assembly

16. Once the cursory agenda items (acceptance of observers, credentials, welcome to new states, election of officers, adoption of minutes, awards) were dealt with, member states moved on to more substantive discussions. Highlights included the following:

DG Position

17. There was some consternation among GA delegates regarding the Council's recommendation for a new Director General, but according to the rules, the only option for the GA was an up or down vote on the recommendation for Bouchenaki. Had the General Assembly chosen to reject the recommendation, an interim DG would have had to be appointed and a new recommendation made to the next GA in two years' time. No one wanted to see that happen, and ultimately, the voting reflected a fairly clear majority in favor of the Council's recommendation to hire Bouchenaki. Several interventions were made, both praising the work of Stanley-Price and advocating trust that the Council was doing what was best for the organization.

Budget

18. USDEL was not able to convince enough like-minded states to accept any changes in the proposed budget for the current biennium (2005-2007). Part of the reason is contained in the Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly, which require any proposals to change either the draft program of activities or the draft budget in any significant way to be submitted in writing at least 30 days before the opening of the GA, and prohibits discussion of any such proposals not submitted ahead of time. USDEL made budget interventions under two different agenda items: during the report of the Council as well as during the discussion of the program of activities and budget.

19. Per ref guidance, USDEL made the following points during the report of the Council: the U.S. is pleased that ICCROM has made use of results-based management principals, including goals and performance indicators; the process is nearly as important as the outcome because it forces the organization to continually examine itself, what it does well and not so well, and what its core mission is; and this is particularly important in an era of diminishing resources. USDEL sought clarification on carryover funds from the 2003-2003 and 2004-2005 biennia (any carryover is deposited directly into the strategic reserve) and inquired as well as to why the zero real growth financial strategy was applied to member states' contributions rather than to the actual expenditures of the organization. Even though actual expenditures were well above ZRG levels (7.1% v. 5.6%), USDEL could not get much traction or support from others on this issue, including after a more or less non-answer from the Secretariat.

110. Under the program and budget agenda item, USDEL again intervened, along the following lines: while we appreciate the thought that went into the program of activities and acknowledge that ZRG was previously approved as a long-term financial strategy, our policy toward all international organizations remains zero nominal growth; we did not support ZRG two years ago and do not support it now; while the U.S., Germany and Japan may not be able to win a GA vote, together we represent 50% of the organization's assessed contributions, we all advocate ZNG, and particularly with the prospect of complete Japanese withdrawal after 2007, we believe this is a matter for serious consideration; we urge ICCROM to absorb cost increases through prioritization and increased efficiencies (for example, using the strategic reserves to cover cost increases); we urge ICCROM to conduct a thorough review of all its activities with an eye toward concentrating resources on the organization's core competencies and strengths; and finally, we urge ICCROM to prepare and present a ZNG budget as the basis for discussion at any future gatherings.

¶11. Similar interventions were made by the Germans and Japanese, and other calls for a ZNG budget were made by the Finnish and Czech delegations. In the end, the budget for the 2005-07 biennium was approved as proposed, but in the statements of the Secretariat as well as several other member states, it became clear that USDEL was being heard and that a ZNG budget scenario will be prepared for the next GA in 2007. This was confirmed at the Saturday Council session that followed the GA.

Other

¶12. A recommendation from the Council to adopt a triennial (vice biennial) General Assembly and budget cycle was withdrawn after it became clear that the GA wanted additional study and information from the Council on the ramifications of such a change. Clarifications of the rules regarding the reappointment of the Director General as well as the election of the President and Vice Presidents of the General Assembly were approved, as well as a change in the statutes regarding sanctions imposed on member states in arrears, without discussion. Thirteen new members of the ICCROM Council were elected for four-year terms, including the reelection of U.S. Council member Blaine Cliver.

Comment

¶13. At the follow-on session for the newly elected Council on Saturday, U.S. Council member Blaine Cliver was elected Council Chair. This puts Cliver in a prime position to influence the direction of the organization, particularly as a new Director General gets settled in. Though acting in his personal capacity and not as a member of any government, Cliver is a retired National Park Service employee, has been engaged with ICCROM for many years and has cooperated fully with USG efforts involving the organization. Now that he has attained what is arguably the most influential ICCROM position short of Director General, it is vitally important that the issue of USG financial support for his travel to Council sessions be resolved.

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